

THE FACE OF ROSENTEL.

CHARLES HOWARD MONTAGUE.

THE BURNED PAPER.

For once the stoical Lamar lost his composure.

"For God's sake, how did it happen?" In a hollow voice Maxey made the reply.

"They were alone."

The physician was speechless. Maxey thought him horrified. On the contrary, he was amazed. When he found his voice again, there was but a single word in his vocabulary equal to the situation, and he uttered it:

"Impossible!"

Maxey did not heed him, but went on in a hopeless tone:

"It was my fault, of course, entirely my fault. I allowed myself to be led by her girlish whim when I ought to have looked the matter squarely in the face and asserted my own will. I ought to have taken your advice, Lamar. You knew it—your foretold it all. You warned!"

Dr. Lamar interrupted him.

"Not of any such occurrence as this, Maxey. Never. Do you mean to tell me that you think the patient tightened that handkerchief around your sister's throat?"

"I tell you," said Maxey, "I left them alone—absolutely alone. When I came back the door was locked."

"On the inside?"

"On the inside."

Lamar swept a bewildered glance about the apartment, stared at the pale face on the bed in the alcove room, at the swollen features behind the torn drapery, at the professionally anxious visage of the nurse, who was moving about between the two. He looked at the doors, at the windows, at the chimney place. He stepped from the corner where he had been talking with Maxey to the center table and began very carefully to put his surgical instruments back into the case from which he had lately removed them. When he had completed this task, he closed the box with a sudden snap, and turning to the artist with the positive energy of a man who has thoroughly made up his mind said:

"Maxey, you are crazy!"

His emphatic manner roused the young man from his stupor. From the moment when he heard the key fall from its place on the inside of the door as he tried to open it everything had seemed to him like the illogical, haphazard happenings of a dream. If he had acted with promptness and vigor in the emergency, he had done so mechanically, in a sort of instinctive fashion, without reflection. After assistance had arrived and the immediate excitement was over he went about in a daze. The physician's sharp tone made him start. He lifted his eyes from the floor, unclasped his hands, which had been folded behind his back, and passed his palm over his throbbing forehead.

"I believe you are more than half right," he murmured. "The blow was so sudden and unexpected that it crushed me. Lamar, you have always been the best of friends to me. We were boys together. I know you wouldn't deceive me about a matter of this kind. Tell me the truth at once. You have grave fears for Ellen?"

"No, I haven't," returned Lamar quickly. "I have no fears at all. She will be herself again with proper care in three days. Don't imagine from that there has been no danger. It was a terribly narrow escape."

"Escape from what, from whom? You said just now that I was crazy, Lamar, because I gave utterance to what seemed to me the only possible suspicion a man could entertain. I come home, find them alone, and I infer that the poor, irresponsible creature had indeed fulfilled your prediction and brought terrible trouble upon us. And now you say?"

"Impossible," the physician interposed positively.

"Annette did not do it?"

"Annette could not have done it."

Maxey seemed electrified. He glanced around the room with an air of suspicion and excitement. Then with characteristic impulsiveness he seized his hat and coat.

Lamar, who had been watching him with a look of grave concern in his handsome features, laid his hand gently on his shoulder.

"What are you going to do?"

"Do? I am going to the police. I am going to have this matter investigated at once!"

He stopped short, amazed by the expression which he saw in the physician's face.

"No, Julian Maxey, not if I can prevent it."

The serious, earnest gravity, the utter solemnity of Dr. Lamar's speech and manner, frightened the artist.

"What is it, Lamar? For heaven's sake, what are you thinking about?"

"I cannot tell you here. Let me see you in private."

A nervous trembling took Maxey all at once. He did not know why. He led the way to the front of the house. There was a dim light in the parlor. Maxey did not turn it up. He sat down close beside the physician on a sofa. Lamar did not seem to see his way clearly to what he wanted to say, and after a moment's silence Maxey spoke up excitedly:

"There's something on your mind, Lamar. I know it. There is something which you know and I don't know, so serious that you hesitate to tell me of it."

"No," said Lamar gravely. "I know nothing which you do not know—much less, in fact, than you ought to know. I only desire that you shall stop to think before you act. You have not told me everything."

"Good heavens, how am I to tell you everything? We must question Ellen."

"I had rather not question Ellen."

Maxey was silent from astonishment.

"My dear boy," said the physician in a low and not wholly steady voice, "are you sure your sister has been entirely happy of late?"

"I am quite sure she has not!" cried

Children Cry for

Pitcher's Castoria.

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Maxey impetuously.

"Do you know what troubled her?"

Maxey did not answer, but he became scarlet to the roots of his hair. The light was dim, but the change in the artist's manner did not escape the observant physician. Dr. Lamar became slightly embarrassed.

"I beg your pardon if in my anxiety for your welfare I have touched on a family matter."

"It is nothing to be ashamed of," blurted out Maxey, "but it is her own secret, and I have no right to mention it. She has never whispered a word to me. But I am not blind."

"Don't betray her, I beg of you," said the physician earnestly, "but when she recovers, if you have any power to remove the cause of her unhappiness, do so. I say this in all earnestness. She must not be allowed to brood."

Maxey suddenly arose. For the first time the nature of his friend's suspicion dawned upon him.

"You believe this was my sister's own act?" he exclaimed in an unnatural calm voice.

"She wore the handkerchief about her neck. I noticed it this afternoon."

"She did!" cried Maxey, losing his calmness all at once. "She did, but don't you flatter yourself, Lamar, that the unhappiness I spoke of was of sufficient strength to induce the poor girl to take her own life. Not a bit of it, sir. Not in the least! Preposterous! It would have urged her rather to live. The idea! Why, there isn't a naturally more cheerful and contented person alive than my sister Ellen. Kill herself? I guess not. One of these days, Lamar, you'll see what a fool you've made of yourself. Is this your ground for believing Annette incapable? Eustace, if I am crazy, you're a raving maniac."

The artist was pacing the floor excitedly and spoke as if he was addressing a multitude.

"Don't talk so loud," said Lamar, a little impatiently. "You know I am the last man in the world to wish to believe this theory. You know I would never mention it to any other than yourself. Nothing but a sense of duty and personal friendship would induce me to speak of it now. If it is true, it is necessary that you should be warned. If it is not true, you will forgive me for speaking of it. You believe, Maxey, that the imbecile pulled the ends of the handkerchief over your sister's head. Did the imbecile also lock the door?"

Maxey stopped abruptly in his walk as if he had suddenly encountered a wall. There was complete silence for full a minute, and then the artist spoke in a different tone.

"I am acting like a lunatic," he said quietly. "I have too little system. I only take in half the situation and ignore the other half. There is a significance in that locked door, quite other perhaps than I had imagined. We each jumped to a conclusion. We undoubtedly are both wrong. Lamar, I am going to search the house. Will you come too?"

His manner was so much more calm than it had been that Dr. Lamar felt relieved of a great responsibility.

"You have recovered yourself, Maxey," he said. "Don't lose your head again at the first new turn in affairs."

Maxey accepted the rebuke quietly.

"You are right, Eustace. I do lose my head too easily. But I have recovered myself now. Meanwhile I am afraid we have lost very valuable time."

Dr. Lamar arose with a new light in his eyes.

"Then you think?"

"That somebody may have been here in my absence."

This seemed a positively luminous idea to the physician. Bad as the alternative was, under the circumstances both men would be glad to accept it.

Nevertheless Lamar said doubtfully:

"Do you suspect anybody?"

"No."

"Is there any possible motive?"

"To kill my sister? In God's name, how could there be?"

"What enemies have you?"

"None, thank God!"

Lamar sighed. After all, was there much possibility in the artist's suggestion? All at once he turned upon his friend with a new question:

"Maxey, are you sure you have not been robbed?"

Maxey started.

"I was thinking of that very thing myself. I have not missed anything, but I have been very much excited, and possibly—possibly, Lamar, I see it all. We went out, and the thief who had been watching his chance crept in. All was dark here, and while he was searching for valuables he alarmed Ellen, who was asleep on the bed. She thought perhaps it was myself returning and called to him. To save himself he sprang upon her and choked her."

The obvious objection to your theory is that the supposed thief might have escaped through this door by simply turning the key in the lock. It was locked on the inside, was it not?"

"It was and is and will remain so until I get the leisure to bring a locksmith here to fix it. I twisted the key off in the lock the other day and nothing will dislodge the stump."

Maxey began his search of the premises by looking under a sofa and behind a bookcase. From this thorough beginning he went on in a most careful and methodical manner, peeping into closets, opening drawers to ascertain whether their contents had been disturbed and leaving no spot unvisited, the position of no carefully thrown aside article unexplained. The search was fruitless. Not an atom of evidence to substantiate the theory advanced by Maxey could be discovered. Both men were disappointed and thoughtful when the tour of investigation was finished.

They stood at last before the grate in the room, with the nurse and the two sufferers, warming their hands. Once in awhile Maxey's troubled gaze sought Dr. Lamar's face, but the physician's glance was downward and his brow contracted.

Lamar tapped his foot moodily against the fender and seemed wrapped in a brown study. Maxey longed for some word of encouragement or comfort from his friend, the physician. He had the greatest confidence in Dr. Lamar's carefully considered opinions, but this time the physician did not seem to have any opinion to offer.

Suddenly Lamar's attention was caught by an object lying on the hearthstone. He stooped and picked it up.

"Have you been burning paper, Maxey?"

"No," returned Maxey quickly. "I have not."

"What is that?"

Maxey took from his hand the corner of a newspaper with a charred edge. He scrutinized it suspiciously. Ordinarily he would have thrown such an object aside contemptuously. In the present emergency he would have examined a pin if Lamar had handed it to him.

"Have you burned any paper in this grate, Mrs. Davis?" asked Maxey of the nurse. "Think before you speak. It may be a very important matter."

"I have not had any paper in my hand since I have been here. That's easily settled."

"There has been a very large piece of paper burned here," said Lamar in a whisper. "See there, and there! The black ashes are all about."

The physician stamped his foot near the grate, and the little breath of air caused by the concussion made a rustle of light burned paper on the floor.

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nevertheless Maxey tried the door. It was securely fast.

This being the only means of getting into the outer hall, except by the door which led from the little vestibule belonging to the suit, a passageway extending the width of Miss Maxey's sleeping chamber and connecting the large rear room with the back parlor, Maxey naturally saw no objection to his theory so far. Out of this private hall were three doors besides the outer door—one opening at one end into the sitting room, another at the other extremity into the rear parlor, and the third at the back into Miss Maxey's chamber. It would have been easy for the intruder, to have ample provision for his purpose, to have escaped observation until a suitable opportunity presented for his safe escape from the suit.

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paper which I was very anxious to keep, and which Ellen was quite as particular about. I left it here on the table. What do you make of it, Lamar? What would you do?"

"I confess I am in the dark. But I am very certain you want to save that scrap of paper and to keep the event in mind. If not now, the day may come when it will supply a most important evidence. As for now, I would suggest that you question the people in the house."

Maxey proceeded at once to act upon the suggestion. The physician, after stopping a moment to examine his patient, put on his hat and followed him. The occupants of the floor below had heard nothing and seen nothing, but Maxey persisted with the determination of despair. He found the janitor at the foot of the stairs.

"My good man," he said to him, "do you recall seeing me go out with my friend, the doctor, here, just after dark?"

"I do, sir, very well, sir."

"It is very important that you should not give a hasty answer to the question I am going to ask you—very important, for a failure in your recollection may get us all into trouble."

"I hope, Mr. Maxey, there is nothing serious in the matter."

"Your hopes are vain then. There is something very serious in the matter. Did you see anybody about the hall after my departure?"

"No, sir."

"You are sure?"

"I am, because, you see, I was going down cellar at the time to look after the furnaces, and I staid below there for an hour. No, sir, I am sorry I can't help you, but I haven't seen anybody. Matter in what portion of the house he may be, he always comes to me when I begin to play, lying close to the piano. I have an old organ. It is one of those instruments with many stops and but few good qualities. I think I have been able, after much endeavor, to distinguish two different qualities of tone in all of the long row of stops, but my dog were not as acute as his. I play for variety upon the organ, notwithstanding its being antiquated, and my dog seems to enjoy this as much as the piano, all except one stop. Whenever I pull that stop out, he rises to his feet suddenly and commences to bark and sometimes biting at the organ. Now, to my ear that stop makes no difference in the sound of the organ. I have tried hard to detect the distinctive quality which aggravates the dog's nature, but without success. I have tried to fool

the old fellow by commencing a tune upon one stop and suddenly pulling out the choroidal one. He never fails to detect this, although the sound to me is just the same."—Pittsburg Dispatch.

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